

TO ALL PROSPECTIVE OFFERORS

We appreciate your interest in the Multiple Award Schedules (MAS) Program. Under the MAS Program, the General Services Administration (GSA) establishes long-term Governmentwide contracts with commercial firms to provide Government agencies with access to a wide variety of commercial supplies (products) and services. This letter provides pertinent background information on the MAS Program. We hope you will consider this information in deciding whether to submit an offer for an MAS contract. Please read this letter in its entirety to learn about the benefits and responsibilities associated with being an MAS contract holder. We believe you will then be better able to determine whether obtaining an MAS contract is the right business decision for your firm.

The MAS Program is designed to enable Government agencies to purchase commercial supplies and services quickly, efficiently, and at fair and reasonable prices. It enables Government agencies to comply with all Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) requirements when "easy-to-use" MAS ordering procedures are followed. The commercial supplies and services awarded under MAS contracts are divided into distinct Schedules. In total, there are over 18,000 MAS contracts in place, covering over 11 million items.

Becoming a successful MAS contractor requires that your company take a few key steps. The first step to success under the MAS Program is to perform due diligence and understand your commitments and obligations as an MAS contractor. Companies that have prepared well, understand their commitments and obligations, and have plans to meet those commitments and obligations have thrived under the MAS Program.

The next step is to select the Schedule that best aligns to the supplies and/or services your company wants to offer. This action can be accomplished by accessing Schedules e-Library at www.gsa.gov/elibrary. From the Schedules e-Library website, click on the "Federal Supply Schedule Listing" tab at the top of the page to view the complete list of Schedules. By clicking on any Schedule number, you can then view the generic categories of supplies and services under a particular Schedule.

Once you have determined the proper Schedule under which to submit your offer, the next step is to download, read, and understand the solicitation for this Schedule. You may access this solicitation (from Schedules e-Library) by clicking on "Vendors: Click here to view the current solicitation on FedBizOpps," which is located on *each individual Schedule's page*. It is essential to read the *entire Schedule solicitation*. Understanding the terms and conditions of an MAS contract and your contractual obligations is critical to your success as an MAS contract holder.

You can also download the solicitation directly from FedBizOpps by accessing www.fedbizopps.gov. From the FedBizOpps website, you may search by GSA Office, Solicitation Number, or Keyword. We encourage you to visit both Schedules e-Library and FedBizOpps, since each site provides other important news and information.

Please note that the award of an MAS contract does NOT guarantee future sales. Although the MAS Program provides significant benefits to Government agencies, they are not required to use the MAS Program to fulfill their requirements. With thousands of contracts already in place, competition for orders under the MAS Program is fierce.

TO HELP YOU DECIDE IF AN MAS CONTRACT IS RIGHT FOR YOU

First, take the "Pathway to Success" education seminar. You may attend either a live presentation or complete the web based presentation posted on the Vendor Support Center (VSC) at vsc.gsa.gov under the "Vendor Training" tab. "Pathway to Success" is designed to assist prospective MAS contractors in making informed business decisions as to whether obtaining an MAS contract is in their best interests. The presentation also provides background information on the MAS Program. Offerors are advised that certification of course completion is a prerequisite for participation in the MAS Program.

Also available at this location is the New Contractor Orientation webcast under the "Vendor Training" tab. The webcast was developed to define key contract requirements with which a vendor must comply, and outlines how GSA evaluates MAS contract performance. While visiting the VSC, also review *The Steps to Success: How to be a Successful Contractor* under the "Publications" tab. This document provides an overview of MAS contract requirements, including key reporting documents. Both learning tools are highly recommended reading, as they provide information for you to confidently comply with contractual obligations, and ensure that you are ready to be an excellent MAS contractor.

Then, identify and assess your competition. This important task can be accomplished by visiting Schedules e-Library at www.gsa.gov/elibrary and GSA *Advantage!*® at www.gsa.gov/advantage. In addition to providing access to Schedule solicitations, Schedules e-Library is our online source for MAS contract award information; GSA *Advantage!*® is our online shopping and ordering system. Both websites contain information regarding the supplies and services that current MAS contractors already offer. The information collected from these websites should assist you in identifying potential competitors under the MAS Program. The knowledge gained from this effort will help you assess your firm's ability to compete, if awarded an MAS contract. Your review of the competition should include: competitors' pricing, delivery times, warranty terms, services, and any other elements that make their offerings distinctive.

Another online tool for assessing your MAS Program competition is Schedule Sales Query (SSQ) at www.gsa.gov/schedulesalesquery. SSQ provides detailed sales information on current MAS contractors. On this site, you can search to see if your competitors have successfully sold similar supplies and/or services under the MAS Program.

Your review and analysis of the preceding websites should allow you to assess the competitive environment for the supplies (products) and/or services you want to provide. Once you understand the terms you will have to follow and the market in which you will

operate, you can then decide whether an MAS contract is the right investment for your firm.

We also recommend that you become familiar with Federal procurement proposal evaluation factors. At a minimum, Government buyers will evaluate price and past performance, and possibly your firm's expertise in providing the supplies and/or services you are seeking to offer. Purchasers under the MAS Program make a selection of an MAS contractor based upon "best value." FAR 2.101 defines "best value" as the expected outcome of an acquisition that, in the Government's estimation, provides the greatest overall benefit in response to the requirement.

An important criteria to consider is whether the items you propose to offer are compliant with the Trade Agreements Act. The Trade Agreements Act (19 U.S.C. 2501, *et seq.*) is the enabling statute that implements numerous multilateral and bilateral international trade agreements and other trade initiatives. Since the estimated dollar value of each Schedule exceeds the established Trade Agreements Act (TAA) threshold, the TAA is applicable to all Schedules. In accordance with the TAA, only U.S.-made or designated country end products shall be offered and sold under Schedule contracts.

GSA offers Government buyers training and provides them with informational material about the benefits of the MAS Program. Such benefits include the following:

- Acquisition lead time is reduced.
- Schedules provide a wide selection of state-of-the-art commercial supplies and services.
- Schedule orders are not required to be synopsized.
- GSA has already determined Schedule prices to be fair and reasonable.

Although GSA provides informational material on the benefits of the MAS Program, GSA does not market or promote specific contracts, does not distribute products of individual firms, and does not steer business to any individual contractor. If awarded an MAS contract, you will be required to market your supplies and/or services to Government agencies. You will also be required to upload an approved Schedule pricelist on GSA *Advantage!*®. Since purchasing authority is spread out across all Government agencies, marketing your supplies and/or services to Government customers may not be an easy task. You are strongly encouraged to target markets and build relationships in much the same way you market to commercial customers. Finally, how well you perform under your MAS contract is up to you.

If you decide to submit an offer and are awarded an MAS contract, be advised that GSA will expect your company to exceed \$25,000 in sales within the first two years after your contract is awarded. Your company will then be expected to exceed \$25,000 in sales each succeeding year in order to retain your MAS contract. If your company is newly established or has had low sales in the supplies (products) and/or services you want to offer under the MAS Program, you should consider the difficulty you may have in

meeting this performance requirement. If you ultimately decide to submit an offer under the MAS Program, having a business plan to meet this performance requirement will be critical to ensuring your success as an MAS contractor.

YES, I WANT TO SUBMIT AN OFFER

Excellent! GSA is always looking for highly qualified firms ready to increase competition and serve the needs of our fellow Government agencies. While not all firms are awarded MAS contracts, the MAS Program, in accordance with statutory authority, is open to all responsible Offerors. To be considered for award of an MAS contract, you must demonstrate that your firm meets all MAS Program requirements, including price. To understand the term *responsible*, please refer to FAR 9.104-1, which identifies the standards a prospective contractor must possess to be determined responsible.

Currently, the time required to evaluate and award an MAS contract can range from three to six months. Well prepared and documented offers with competitive pricing are easier to evaluate and, therefore, may expedite the award process. Offers requiring numerous corrections and clarifications take much longer to be evaluated. To submit a complete offer that can be easily evaluated the first time, you are encouraged to pursue the training opportunities listed below to help improve the quality of your offer and accelerate its review:

- Take the free Center for Acquisition Excellence online course, "How to Become a Contractor -- GSA Schedules Program." Visit the Center for Acquisition Excellence at www.gsa.gov/centerforacquisitionexcellence to register and access the course in the Learning Center. This ten lesson course describes the features of the MAS Program, how to submit an offer, the contract award process, and how to successfully market supplies and services on an MAS contract.
- Attend a free GSA training session on how to obtain an MAS contract. To view a list of available training, access www.gsa.gov and click on "How to Get on Schedule" under "Training from GSA."

As an alternative to the paper submission of offers, GSA has developed eOffer, see www.eoffer.gsa.gov, a web based application that allows an Offeror to prepare and submit an MAS offer electronically. eOffer is designed to create an interactive, secure environment that simplifies the contracting process from submission of offers to contract awards. eOffer uses the latest digital authentication technology to ensure the integrity of data and to electronically sign the offer. Digital certificates are required in order to use eOffer. The eOffer website at www.gsa.gov/eoffer contains a variety of information regarding the eOffer application, including available training, information regarding digital certificates, and identification of those Schedules under which eOffers are currently being accepted.

In order to streamline and accelerate the offer review process, GSA has implemented the MAS Express Program, a specialized program established under the MAS Program.

The ultimate goal of the MAS Express Program is to award MAS contracts within 30 days. For more details regarding the program, including those Schedules under which offers are currently being accepted, access the MAS Express Program website at www.gsa.gov/masexpress. Also, visit the Vendor Support Center at vsc.gsa.gov for additional information, including the MAS Express Program's core criteria and answers to the most frequently asked questions.

Under the MAS Express Program, an Offeror may prepare and submit an MAS Express offer electronically using "Express eOffer," an application similar to eOffer, but *specifically designed for the MAS Express Program*. The eOffer website at www.gsa.gov/eoffer provides the requisite information regarding the Express eOffer application, including those Schedules under which Express eOffers are currently being accepted.

Once you submit an offer, GSA will look for a number of items. We will verify that you have submitted all the required information necessary to evaluate your offer. The following are key elements of your offer that will be reviewed:

- Pricing;
- Past performance;
- Scope - the supplies/services are within the scope of the Schedule;
- Financial capability;
- Technical;
- Subcontracting Plan (if you are not a small business concern); and
- Other regulatory compliance.

Good Luck. We want you to be successful, and look forward to the start of a long and successful partnership.

NO, I DO NOT WANT TO SUBMIT AN OFFER RIGHT NOW. WHAT OTHER OPTIONS DO I HAVE FOR FEDERAL BUSINESS?

If you decide an MAS contract is not a good fit for your firm at this time, you can still participate in other Federal Government acquisitions. In some cases, pursuing other avenues may be even more advantageous.

Other Government contracting opportunities are posted on FedBizOpps at www.fedbizopps.gov. Commercial vendors seeking Federal markets can search, monitor, and retrieve solicitations for supplies and services issued by all Federal agencies. The FAR addresses the circumstances under which an acquisition of supplies or services with an estimated dollar value of exceeding \$3,000 but not over \$100,000 shall be set aside for small business concerns.

Business concerns may also participate in subcontracting opportunities with companies already under contract to the Government. The U.S. Small Business Administration at www.sba.gov provides information on subcontracting, as well as other topics of interest to firms seeking business opportunities. Existing Schedule contractors are always looking for opportunities to subcontract to small business, small disadvantaged business, women-owned small business, HUBZone small business, veteran-owned small business, and service-disabled veteran-owned small business concerns.

Remember, the MAS Program is continually open. If you have determined the MAS Program is not the correct contracting vehicle for your firm at this time, we encourage you to periodically revisit your business plan and the opportunity to market your supplies and/or services under the MAS Program at a later date.

Thank you for taking the time to learn about the MAS Program. We wish you great success in whatever method you chose to market to Government agencies.